

### PUTTING YOUR GARDEN TO REST FOR THE WINTER\*

Too often people have a tendency to think that it's all over in the garden when the leaves start to fall. This actually could not be more wrong, especially when you are gardening in the city. To have a bigger or better and easier garden to manage next year, here are a few hints.

1. Remove all dead or wilted stems, leaves, stalks or other leftover plant parts. This includes weeds and their roots. Rake all fallen leaves. Very often fungi and other diseases or insects will survive in this decaying matter if not removed and managed in a properly maintained compost heap.
2. All suitable decaying plant material should be piled up for removal to your compost pile. Weeds with ripe or mature seeds or invasive—e.g. mugwort, thistle, wild onion, dock, dandelion, nighshade—roots, and leaves of plants that have had fungal infections should **NOT** be composted, however. Of course, your perennial areas should be clearly marked and their roots should not be disturbed. Peony leaves should not be composted because of the risk of fungus disease.
3. A clean garden is easier to work in the spring. Be sure, no matter how tempted, to throw away the plants that are not suitable—do not just leave them in a pile. Throw them away! (See composting Sheet).
4. Take a soil sample from your garden. (See Urban Soil Sheet). Test it for pH and NPK. If you do not have a well-balanced soil, your flowers may get great stems and leaves, but few if any flowers, and your plants will not reach their fullest potential. The best time to condition the soil is in the fall—allowing for ample adjustment of whatever corrections you may have to make. Most often gardens use up great quantities of organic matter every year. This means leaf mold or ready compost, plus additions of phosphate to promote fruit and flower development, as well as healthy, vigorous roots, and of potash for strong stems and bigger fruits or vegetables. A garden soil too high in nitrogen will grow a lot of green leaves.
5. After testing your soil, make any adjustments necessary. The Council on the Environment has limited soil-testing facilities. You can call and come in to do the test yourself if one of our students is not available. Cornell University co-operative Extension in your borough also has facilities, as do many botanical gardens.
6. After adding lime or organic matter, spade the garden under approximately 1 foot and rake the surface smooth.
7. A cover crop such as rye grass, vetch or winter rye may be sowed and turned under in the early spring provided the land is idle and not being productively used for spring flowering bulbs or winter-hardy annual seeds as in 8.
8. Now, before the snow and frost, is a good time to plant for next spring. The small bulbs such as snowdrops, winter aconite, anemone blanda, squill, crocus, grape hyacinths, as well as daffodils, should have been planted in October, but procrastinators should take a late chance and put all available bulbs in the ground, for saved over they will be worthless. Tulips can be planted quite late, even during a December mild spell. It is worth experimenting with several winter-hardy annual seeds that germinate, become dormant and revive with the first spring sun rays to produce much earlier and stronger flowers than those to be sown next spring. The most commonly sown annuals are larkspur, bachelor buttons (cornflower) nigella (love-in-the-mist), candytuft and alyssum. There are many other annuals worth trying.
9. Scavenging for mulch items can be fun but exercise caution. Diseased London Plane or other diseased street tree leaves should not be used as mulch, nor should they be composted. Cardboard, disease free evergreen or broadleaf drops are appropriate. Other material for mulch might include Styrofoam, burlap, salt hay, newspaper, woodchips, and peat moss. It will pay dividends in the long run to focus on clean, natural mulch material.

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